

ART EXHIBITION CATALOGUES REPUBLISHED ON MICROFICHE

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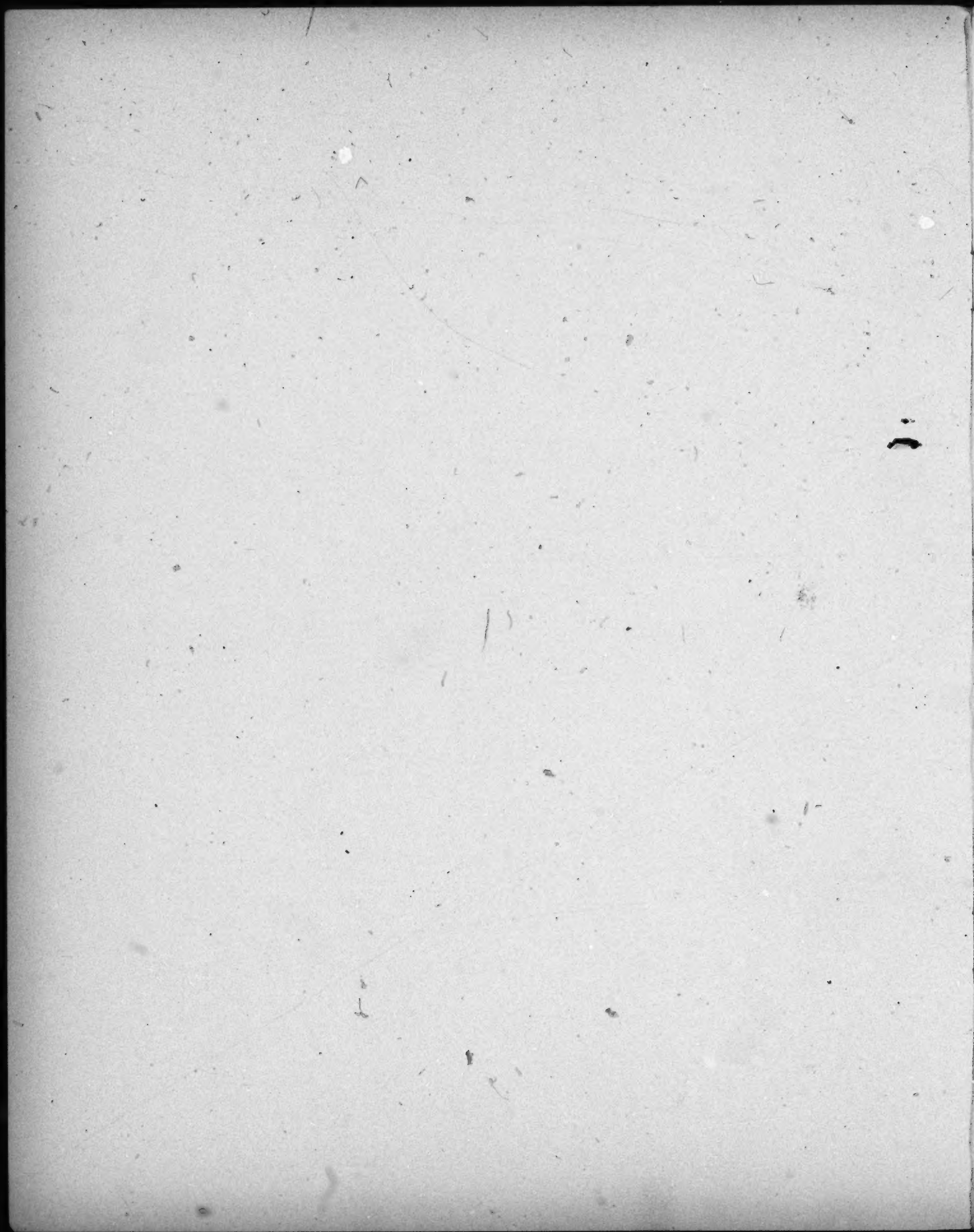
General



Changes Approved
to Modernize 1955

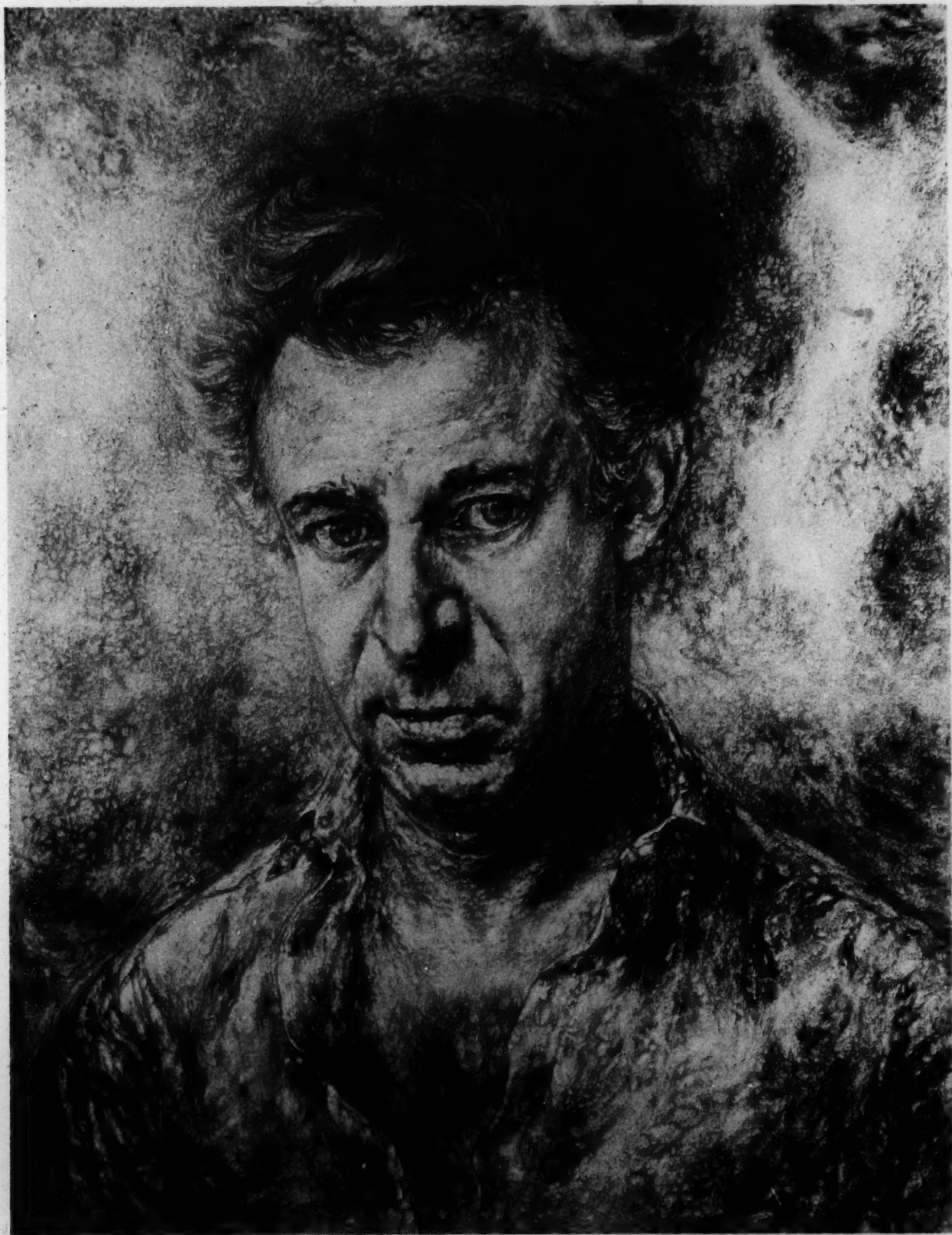
More Money
Fewer Men
Dependence
Needed For

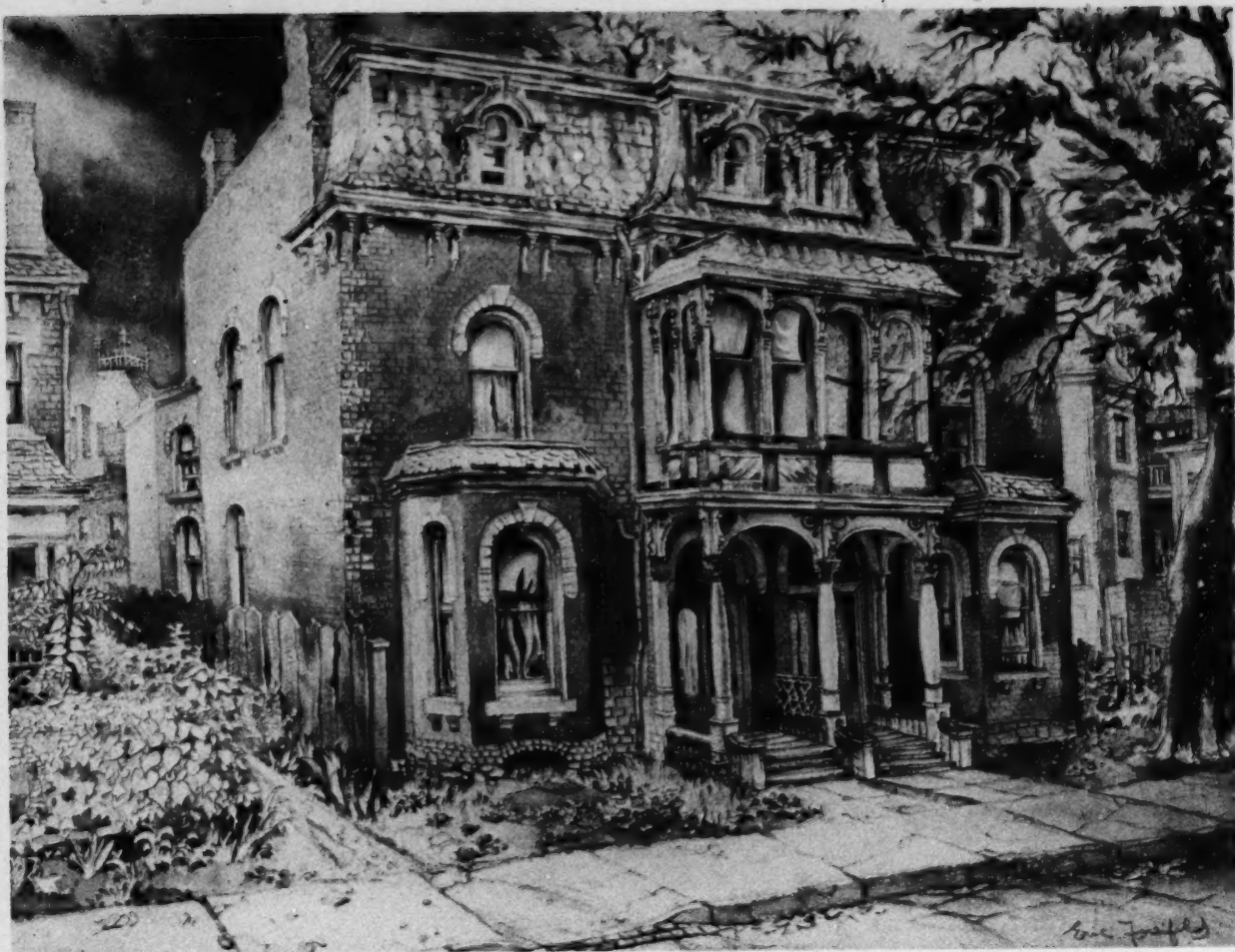
Bombed



ERIC FREIFELD

ERIC FREIFELD, SELECTED WORKS 1938-1968
THE VANCOUVER ART GALLERY, OCTOBER 2-27, 1968





ICHABOD

The work of Eric Freifeld readily falls into three main groups.

I DIRECT DRAWINGS

These are of things—tangible phenomena, capable of observation, definition, analysis. They include the careful sharply accurate portraits such as *Mr. Oakes* and *My Mother* of 1949 and 1962 respectively, and *Old Mill Vancouver* and *Sanitarium*, 1941 and 1949. Freifeld is highly susceptible to the particular life which objects possess—a house, a sofa, a face—in all the detail which belongs to that life and is part of its uniqueness. Therefore, though primarily documentary in character, such drawings will often have the super-real or hallucinatory edge which comes with intense concentration and particularization.

II DIRECT ALLA PRIMA WATERCOLORS

These may have little or no drawing understructure, as *Storm over Alberta*, a small sure sketch done at the age of seventeen, and *Toronto Skyline* of 1954; or rather more prominent drawing bases as *Bellevue Lodge* of 1951. But in any case the primary character is determined by the pattern of brushed color-tone areas and the directness of the medium used loosely and quickly.

These again tend to fall into two approaches: the dramatic, as in *Deserted House Newmarket*, 1946 which heightens a traditionally mysterious theme with strong chiaroscuro and a sense of the unnaturally arrested moment; and those of a lyrical nature which show Freifeld as a relaxed and painterly form-maker. In this vein we have him at his most



PEMBROKE STREET

abstract in *Cecil Street* 1956, *Street of the Chassidim* 1960, and *Red Monoliths* 1961, for instance. Worth noting in these is the restless or exuberant movement contained within a larger context of stability.

III SUSTAINED DRAWING-AND-WATERCOLORS

Essentially elaborately and minutely realized drawings with watercolor playing an accentuating but not structural role.

Freifeld has produced eleven of these altogether (and all are included in this exhibition) from 1950 to the present and increasingly they appear to absorb the functions served by the documentary drawings and the broad watercolors which have almost ceased in the past few years.

On each of these conceptual epics he works with agonizing slowness and over a period of from one to four or five years, completing not more than one or two at most in a year. Each in its time becomes a major project, demanding his total involvement, like a novel taking over its author. When a subject has located him and worked on him (again over a period of years perhaps) a first few on-the-spot composition sketches are made—very reduced and abstract notes—and then possibly a broad watercolor. By this time the big-idea for the work has been resolved and the final drawing is undertaken though it is still to be the field for improvisation, trial and correction. *Pauline* for example, commenced in the summer of 1966, is not yet in its final state: the bag in the lower right corner is due to be removed, the right ear, the chair, the back wall and other



GOMORRAH

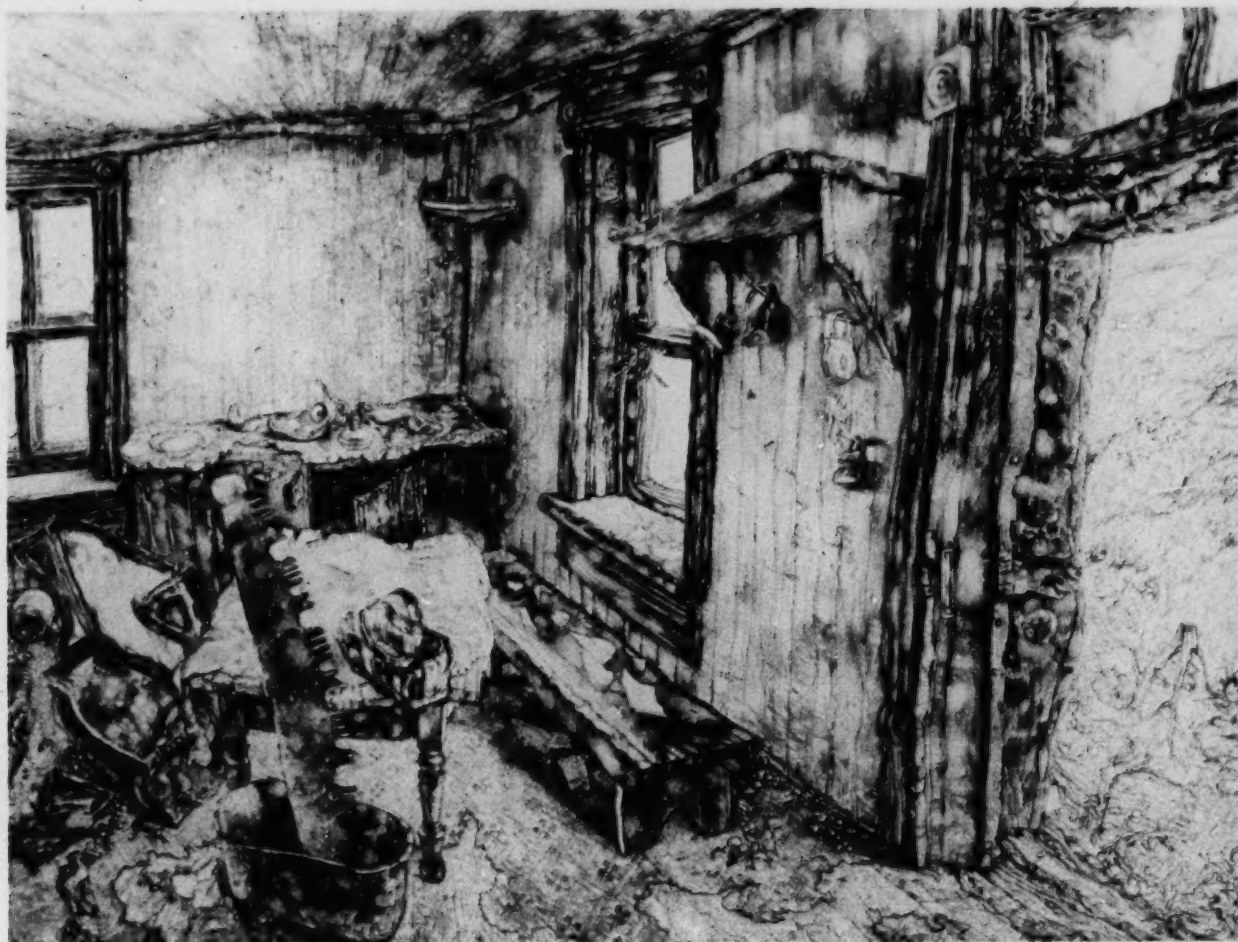
areas of the drawing are all to be developed, altered or completed. *Tutt's Barn* still bears a taped trial patch over the window applied four or five years ago.

Because in these developed and sustained pieces he is working to an imaginative conception, not to a naturalistic form, the painting, like the drawing is a long process, one small area being applied at a time as the concept and the design evolve. Color, always transparent and often no more than a tint, plays a psychological role, heightening the idea as it expands in the imagination by sympathetic pallidness, lividness or flush as the case may be. This group is important not only because the works are the most sustained and complex but because they represent the distilled evolution of a view of life and art. They are:

Ichabod 1950
 Gomorrah 1951
 Back Door 1954
 Pembroke Street 1961-62
 I The Street 1958-61
 Self Portrait 1962-65
 Tutt's Barn 1963-
 The MacNeil Place 1964-
 *Alfred's Room 1964-67-
 Roses Are Red 1964-
 Pauline 1966-

*Alfred, a porcupine who had taken possession of the room.

In all of them the literal subject is something old, worn,



THE MACNEIL PLACE

tired, drenched with human history. The earliest two are concerned with objects that assert their *objectness*—specifically old houses—at the same time their titles *Ichabod* and *Gomorrah* call attention to their human overtones of faded glory and decadence. In *Pembroke St.* and *I the Street* the objects recede and diminish so that they can be surrounded and contained by the space which has been opened up by diagonal vistas disappearing into infinity. Space replaces mass as content. *I the Street* gives name to the character of nameless presence projected by this painting.

With *Back Door*, still rather broadly painted, the locus of existence moves from the out-of-doors, the open street, to more enclosed and private space: the interiors of aban-

doned houses, old sheds, neglected barns. The space not only becomes interior (we are now inside, participants, not outside, spectators) it loses its architectural stability and its measureable finiteness. In *The MacNeil Place* the room's structure is strongly stated but walls buckle, door jambs and windows bow, while in *Roses are Red* all is gently adrift in a space that heaves and sways, advances and recedes in a continuous careening rhythm. As the series continues, the suggestion of the tarnishing effect of humanity becomes more explicit and the sense of the passing of time, reflected in the aging and deterioration of physical substance, very important. *Tutt's Barn*, *The MacNeil Place*, *Alfred's Room*, *Roses are Red* all deal with the spaces and things which were once occupied and used by human beings—now reduced to ruined and

tattered fragments. *Roses are Red* with its messages on the wall, its dead flowers, is a faded and nostalgic monument to the love-hate daily drama enacted by the husband-wife occupants of years before.

The minutiae which comprise these accumulations retain their identity and object relevance, but more significantly acquire an abstract life as texture and as rhythm. Lines and forms pulsate and undulate; surfaces crust and shrivel; differences of substance and scale are swallowed up. Detail has the accumulated value not of factual information but of a total consuming expressiveness. Wrinkles, tatters, encrustations, cracks, withered surfaces—flow together in creating a unified organic fabric, a place and time assimilating texture. They speak with a melancholy and

nostalgic acceptance of the slow and inexorable corrosion of all things, but also of a compensating richness. And yet they speak equally of a will-to-life, for Freifeld's forms, even as they deal more explicitly with age and erosion, project greater energy. Any four-inch detail isolated from the last five or six works, teems, like microbic culture under a telescope, with the life of innumerable lines, each animated by its own inherent rhythm and contributing to larger and yet larger rhythms. It is in this particular tension between formal and literary, aesthetic and psychological, that Freifeld's artistic struggles centre and his individuality lies. The preoccupation with the gritty substance and matter of living and at the same time his preference for watercolor, the most illusory of media, is yet another aspect of the dichotomy.

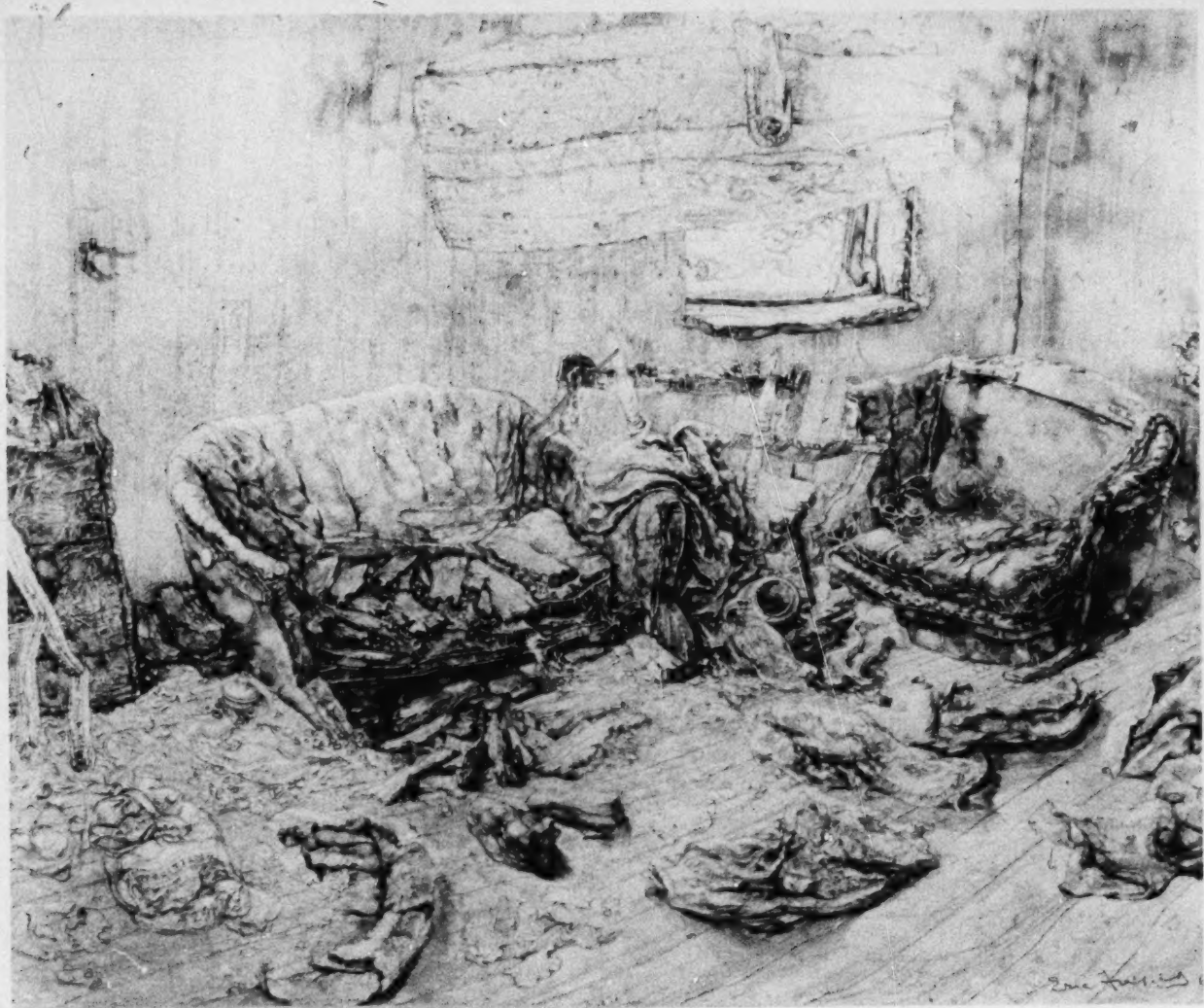


I THE STREET

It is significant that of these eleven works commenced since 1950, five remain unfinished. This does not diminish their effectiveness and moreover it is not inconsistent with the fact that what they are really about is flux and time. As Freifeld said when questioned "life is unfinished too." *Roses are Red*, his most developed and eloquent statement of this point of view, involves time and change not only in its overt reference to the past, but in its structure. The impact of *I the Street* with its single view and deep perspective vanishing point space, is relatively swift, as it is even in *The MacNeil Place* and *Alfred's Room* where the view, while remaining single, has commenced to undulate and waver about its axis. In *Roses are Red* both the proliferation of surface and the change to a multiple point of view involve us in a sequence of shifts in

depth and on the surface as we take in the work. Drawing us up close like a medieval manuscript out of the impact world, and then revealing itself slowly and fragment by fragment, this painting involves us in a visual as well as psychological journey in time.

Pauline, the latest work, also marks a step in the slow evolution toward a more personal and subjective vision. And in taking the enlarged nude figure as its subject, he seems to accept the increasingly humanist implications of his progressive moves from cities to streets to particular houses to intimately-lived-in interiors. Although like the remarkable self-portrait of 1962-65, it deals with a major single image, the intense and varied life given to different parts of the anatomy—as for example the astonishing



ALFRED'S ROOM

right hand which becomes almost a creature on its own—give the figure a polymorphous complexity apart from the psychological interest of the objects and furnishings of the room, as well as physically splintering and distributing the vision over the large expanse of paper. The eye which would like to take in the figure as a single unity, is compelled to explore it in time and depth. Particularly interesting in this latest work is the quality of light which has little to do with the more theatrical cast light and shadow of some earlier works but is of an incandescence which permeates and transforms the flesh, like a chemical substance. This aging and tired nude model, surrounded by her few cherished trinkets projects a dignity which is not in spite of the wrinkles and sagging flesh but includes them as a form of wisdom and experience.

After an early youthful success (at the age of nineteen he had a sell-out exhibition in London) Freifeld wisely decided not to become part of the competitive art world of commercial galleries and high pressured exhibitions. Though a serious and full-time professional (in attitude if not in fact since he has taught for many years at the Ontario College of Art) he has not really sought exhibition or sales. Actually he manifests a rather possessive attitude toward the works which have been created with the patience, care, thought and almost time required for a parent to produce mature offspring.

He works entirely outside the mainstreams and the lime-light of twentieth century art, let alone the currents of the past twenty years. One finds evocations of other twentieth



TUTT'S BARN

century eccentrics in his work: Albright (of whom he had seen virtually nothing until that artist's large exhibition at the Art Institute of Chicago, 1965), Burchfield, Cadmus, Hopper, Wyeth—all of whom he admires. But his real prototypes are to be found among the northern Europeans from van Eyck (whose *Arnolfini and Wife* remains a continuing revelation for him), Schongauer and Altdorfer to Durer and Rembrandt.

As an artist he grew up and was trained in the academic tradition of solid draughtsmanship based on anatomical studies and figure drawing, and composition. He has continued steadfastly in this tradition and has found within it a means of personal expression, capable of expanding and intensifying with his own changing view of life.

Socially, intellectually and artistically he is no recluse and his ability to continue on his isolated, individual path, without deflection or distraction, rests not on an unawareness of the larger movements driving art in other directions, but on the recognition of his own vision.

Doris Shadbolt, Senior Curator

CATALOGUE

Measurements are given in inches,
height preceeding width

1

STORM ALBERTA

10½ x 13½

watercolor

signed lower right 1938

Lent by Ron MacDonald, Toronto

2

RAINY DAY, NICE

19¾ x 22¾

watercolor

signed and dated lower right 1939

Lent by Mrs. Olga Freifeld, Toronto



PAULINE



ROSES ARE RED

3

OLD MILL, VANCOUVER

15 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 21 $\frac{1}{2}$ (sight)

carbon pencil

signed lower right 1942

Lent by the artist

4

DESERTED HOUSE, NEWMARKET

20 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 28 $\frac{1}{2}$ (sight)

watercolor

signed and dated lower right 1947

Lent anonymously

5

SANITARIUM

23 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 17 $\frac{1}{2}$ (sight)

carbon pencil

signed lower right 1948

Lent by the artist

6

MR. OAKES

15-3/16 x 11-13/16

carbon pencil

signed and dated lower right 1948

Lent by the artist

7

EPILOGUE

26½ x 35½ (sight)
watercolor

signed and dated lower right 1950

Lent anonymously

8

**STUDY FOR ICHABOD
(PEMBROKE STREET) TORONTO**

14¾ x 21½
watercolor

signed and dated lower right 1949

Lent by Mrs. A. Sumbling, Mimico

9

ICHABOD

21½ x 29¾ (sight)
carbon pencil and watercolor

signed lower right 1950

Lent by the artist

10

BELLEVUE LODGE

25½ x 39½ (sight)
watercolor

signed and dated lower right 1951

Lent by the artist



STREET OF THE CHASSIDIM FIGURES

**11
GOMORRAH**

20 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 28-7/16 (sight)
carbon pencil and watercolor
signed lower right 1951
Lent by the artist

**12
PORTRAIT OF GERSHON (GEORGE ISKOWITZ)**

21 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 16 $\frac{3}{4}$ (sight)
carbon pencil and watercolor
signed lower right 1952
Lent by the artist

**13
SELF-PORTRAIT**

16-3/16 x 12-15/16 (sight)
carbon pencil over monotype
signed and dated lower right 1954
Lent by the artist

**14
TORONTO SKYLINE**

14 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 21 $\frac{1}{2}$
watercolor
signed lower right 1954
Lent by Mrs. Eric Freifeld, Toronto



ROOF TOPS, NEW YORK

**15
BACK DOOR**

21½ x 29½ (sight)
carbon pencil and watercolor
signed and dated lower right * 1954
Lent by Ron MacDonald, Toronto

**16
CECIL STREET**

14½ x 20½
watercolor
signed lower right 1956
Lent by Mrs. Eric Freifeld, Toronto

**17
STUDIO WINDOW**

30½ x 21¼ (sight)
watercolor
signed lower right 1958
Lent by the artist

**18
STREET OF THE CHASSIDIM FIGURES**

20½ x 28¼ (sight)
watercolor
signed lower right 1960
Lent by Leo Weinstein, Toronto



BACK DOOR

19

EAST RIVER, NEW YORK

22½ x 28½ (sight)

carbon pencil over watercolor

signed lower right 1960

Lent by St. Michael's College, University of Toronto

20

ROOF TOPS, NEW YORK

25 x 39½ (sight)

watercolor

signed lower right 1960

Lent by Percy Penturn, Toronto

21

ROOF TOPS, NEW YORK

21½ x 29½ (sight)

watercolor

signed lower right

Lent anonymously

22

RED MONOLITHS

26½ x 39½ (sight)

watercolor

signed lower right 1961

Lent by Ron MacDonald, Toronto

23

I THE STREET

26 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 39 $\frac{1}{4}$

carbon pencil and watercolor

signed lower right 1958-61

Lent by the artist

24

PEMBROKE STREET

21 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 29-9/16 (sight)

carbon pencil and watercolor

unsigned 1961-62 (unfinished)

Lent by the artist

25

PORTRAIT OF MY MOTHER

22 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 16 $\frac{1}{2}$

carbon pencil

signed lower right 1962

Lent by the artist

26

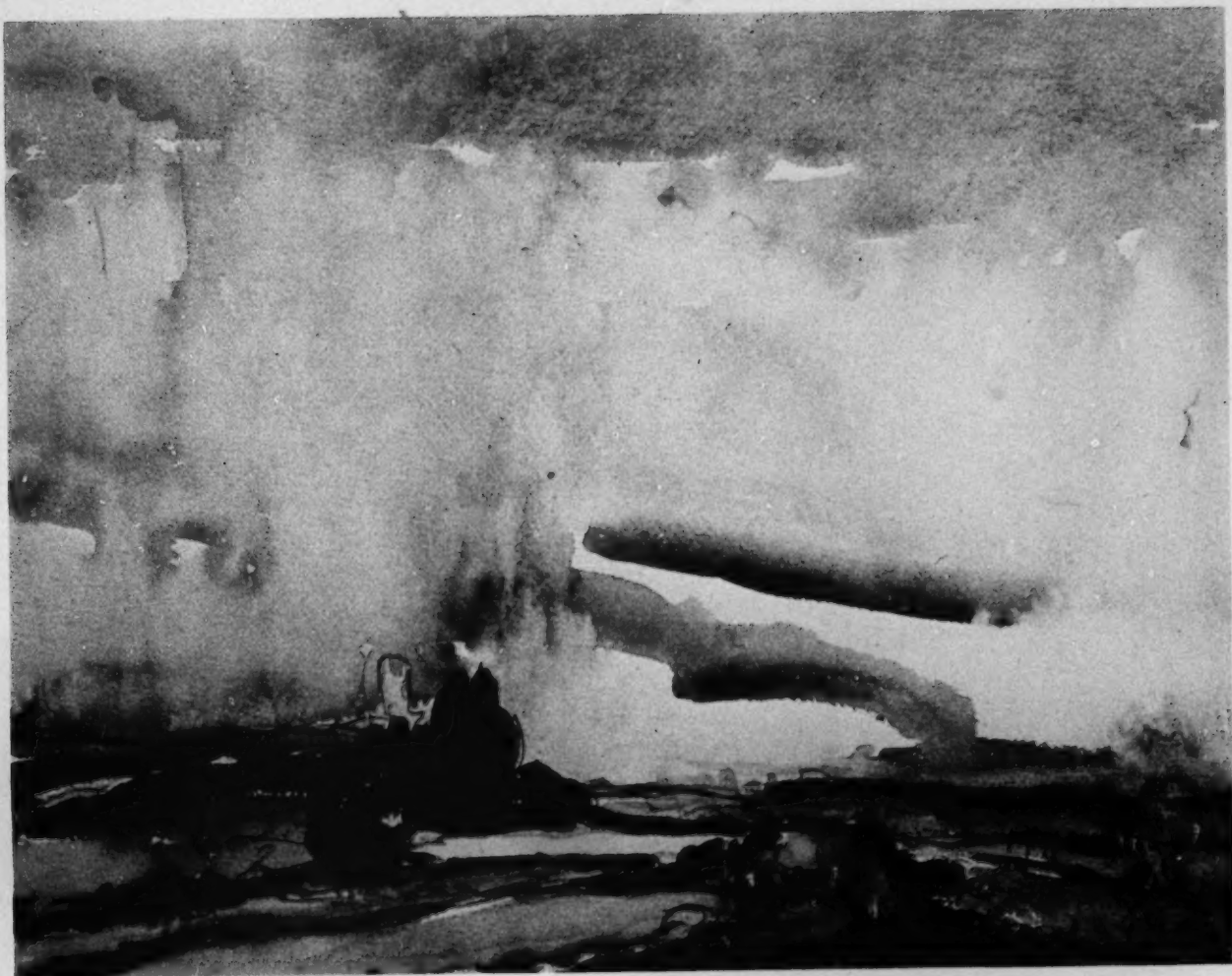
SELF PORTRAIT

20 x 15 $\frac{3}{4}$

drawing over slight wash

unsigned 1962-65

Lent by the artist



STORM ALBERTA

27

TUTT'S BARN

20 x 27 (sight)

carbon pencil and watercolor
unsigned 1963 (unfinished)

Lent by the artist

28

THE MACNEIL PLACE

22½ x 30½

carbon pencil and watercolor
unsigned 1964 (unfinished)

Lent by the artist

29

ALFRED'S ROOM

22½ x 28½

carbon pencil and watercolor
signed and dated lower right 1967 (unfinished)

The Vancouver Art Gallery

Presented in honor of Harry and Hilda Smith

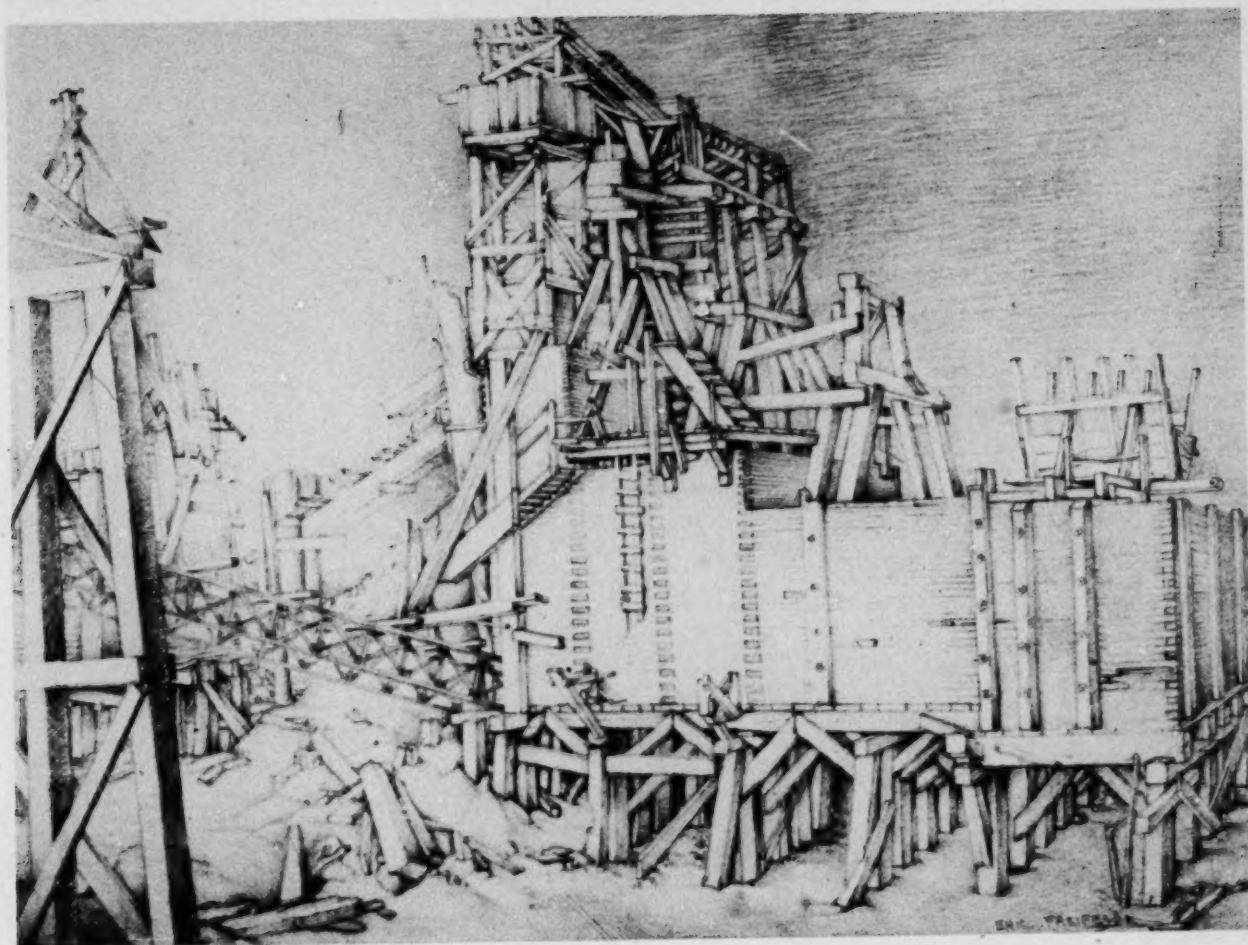
30

ROSES ARE RED

27½ x 40

carbon pencil and watercolor
unsigned commenced 1964 unfinished

Lent by the artist



OLD MILL, VANCOUVER

31

PAULINE

31 1/2 x 22 1/2

carbon pencil

signed lower right commenced 1966 unfinished

Lent by the artist



CHRONOLOGY

1919

Born, March 13; Saratov, Russia

1924

came to Canada; settled in Edmonton

1937

attended Banff School of Fine Arts
(Carnegie Trust Fund Scholarship)

1938-39

studied St. Martin's School of Art,
London, England, life classes;
one-man exhibition Brook Street Galleries,
London, England; painted in France

1940

painted in Vancouver; one-man exhibition
The Vancouver Art Gallery

1942-44

enlisted in the Royal Canadian Engineers
staff artist Canadian Camouflage
School, Vancouver, taught evenings
Vancouver School of Art

1944-46

studied Art Students' League, New York,
life classes and anatomy under
Robert Beverly Hale

1946

joined staff Ontario College of Art
where he still teaches drawing,
painting, anatomy

1961

Canada Council Senior Arts Fellowship
lives in Toronto

MEMBER

Canadian Society of Graphic Art
Canadian Society of Painters in Watercolor
Associate Royal Canadian Academy

EXHIBITED

one-man exhibitions

The Vancouver Art Gallery 1940

Edmonton Art Gallery 1952 & 1966

Hart House, University of Toronto, 1958

Rodman Hall, St. Catharines, 1966

Pickering College, Newmarket, 1952
(3 man exh.)

Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, 1960
(4 man exh.)

Glenhyrst Arts Council, Brantford 1967
(4 man exh.)

group shows in Canada, England,
the United States